Young cyber security ambassador (YCSA) programme

The young cyber security ambassador (YCSA) programme is an educational volunteering programme to inform young people aged 12-17 years around cyber security and positive online behaviours.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Community engagement Cybercrime Digital, data and analytics
Organisation	Yorkshire and Humber Regional Organised Crime Unit
Contact	Richard Wallis
Email address	richard.wallis@yhrocu.police.uk
Region	North East
Partners	Police Business and commerce Education Government department Private sector

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is at a pilot stage.
Start date	March 2025
Scale of initiative	Regional
Target group	Children and young people Communities Disability General public Race/ethnicity Victims Workforce

Aim

The YCSA programme aims to:

- educate and inform young people around cyber security and positive online behaviours
- enable volunteering opportunities for young people to work with policing to raise awareness of cyber security (including Cyber Choices messaging)
- create young role models that champion positive cyber security and online safety messaging across peer groups and within communities
- raise awareness of education and career pathways in cyber security and related digital industries
- connect education providers and employers with young people who aspire to pursue further education and careers within cyber security

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- increase knowledge and understanding of cyber security to enable young people to spread awareness and understanding within their communities, particularly amongst their own peer

groups in schools and colleges

- increase engagement with young people around cyber security and digital safety through a volunteer peer engagement approach
- increase knowledge of both policing and cyber and digital related educational and career pathways and facilitate opportunities for further exploration

Description

The YCSA Programme offers meaningful opportunities for young people aged 12–17, from diverse backgrounds, to:

- learn about cyber security and related topics
- gain experience volunteering at police-led events
- promote positive messaging around safe, lawful online behaviours through Cyber Prevent
- educate citizens and businesses about improving cyber security to reduce the risk of fraud and cybercrime via Cyber Protect

The programme also raises awareness of educational, apprenticeship, and career opportunities in cyber and digital fields, working in partnership with organisations to facilitate access post-16 years.

The YCSA programme has direct links with the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) Cyber & Digital Specials and Volunteers (CDSV) programme and the Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) programme. The target group for the 2025-26 programme will be exclusively VPCs. A regional cohort of 23 cadets have been recruited.

Programme structure

Four police officers/staff are assigned as YCSA Leaders. Each are completing VPC safeguarding training and mentor up to six YCSAs, overseeing their progress and completion.

The programme will have two parallel pathways:

Educational pathway

Ten monthly webinars, delivered between April 2025 and January 2026, each include a knowledge check to assess learning outcomes. All modules are delivered by police and partners, drawn from

their respective specialisms.

Monthly modules include

- April – YCSA – Welcome and Induction (HeadStart and Sudo Range)
- May – Introduction to Cyber Prevent and the Computer Misuse Act 1990
- June – Introduction to Cyber Protect and Cyber Security Principles
- July – Cyber Blue Line and Cyber Spotlight VR (in-person session)
- August – Cyber First Bursary and Apprenticeships
- September – Further and High Educational pathways in Cyber Security
- October – Inspiring talk from a reformed hacker
- December – Understanding Neurodiversity
- January – Education and careers in Esports
- February – Cyber and Digital Careers

The sessions are supported with two online eLearning platforms (Sudo Cyber, Sudo Range Labs and CIISec Headstart Programme). YCSAs are expected to use these eLearning tools weekly, with materials aligned to webinar content.

Volunteering pathway

Each YCSA is expected to complete 20 days of volunteering across the year. Opportunities begin July 2025, after completion of modules one to four. Volunteering is coordinated via the Marshall VPC Portal by YCSA Leaders.

Additional events

- launch event – March 2025 (WYP Carr Gate)
- capture the flag event – August 2025 (Sheffield Hallam University)
- cyber switch up – November 2025 (University of Hull)
- Esports gaming challenge – January 2026 (Sunderland Esports Campus)
- celebration event – March 2026 (Amazon Web Services HQ Cambridge/London)

Delivery partners

- Sheffield Hallam University

- British Esports
- RTC North (Cyber First)
- CENTRIC
- North-East Business Resilience Centre (NEBRC)

Each partner contributes educational sessions and specialist input.

Awards

Three awards will be presented at the celebration event:

- core values award
- education award
- volunteer award

YCSA Leaders will nominate candidates and winners will be selected by a panel including Amazon Web Services (AWS) and delivery partners.

Funding

The YCSA Programme has cost £9,000, with £5,000 funding being provided by the NPCC CDSV grant and a £4,000 sponsorship fund from AWS.

Evaluation

An initial framework for evaluation is under development by the Global Foundation for Community Safety Volunteering and will be refined through further consultation.

Learning

- Explore peer-to-peer volunteering models – assess how young volunteers can effectively deliver Cyber Prevent and Cyber Protect messaging among their peers, including advice on online harms commonly faced by young people.

- Expand roles within the volunteer police cadet scheme – consider how the existing VPC framework could support the creation of specialist ambassador roles, like those in the YCSA programme, focused specifically on cyber security and online safety.

- Encourage collaboration with cyber specialists – evaluate how young policing volunteers can work alongside specialist Cyber Police Officers and Staff to promote cyber awareness and deliver preventative messaging across the community.
- Design independent youth volunteering programmes – investigate the feasibility of setting up a youth-led cyber volunteering programme beyond the VPC, with a focus on sustained delivery across 12 months and potential for long-term continuation.
- Build multi-sector partnerships for youth cyber ambassadors – examine how a youth ambassador model can facilitate collaboration between policing, public sector agencies, academia, and industry, delivering impactful education and engagement around cyber security, while also identifying and nurturing young talent into internship, apprenticeship, and career pathways.

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